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SYLVESTER & ORPHANOS

by

DAN LUCKENBILL

UCLA

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Department of Special Collections

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SYLVESTER & ORPHANOS

Catalog of an exhibit

October–December 1990

written and compiled by

DAN LUCKENBILL

Department of Special Collections
University Research Library
University of California,
Los Angeles, 1990

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FOREWORD

This exhibit focuses on three collecting areas of interest to the Department of Special Collections and the UCLA Library. It highlights fine printing in Los Angeles through the publications of Ralph Sylvester and Stathis Orphanos. It exhibits works by Los Angeles photographer Stathis Orphanos. It stresses a sharing of world cultures through the Sylvester & Orphanos portfolio on the late Greek artist Yannis Tsarouchis.

The exhibit and the catalog show and describe a circle of ever-widening associations, long important to the UCLA Library. The twenty-four signed limited editions of Sylvester & Orphanos have been produced in collaboration with much of the printing and book arts talent in Los Angeles. Lillian Marks, Patrick Reagh, the late Grant Dahlstrom, and many others are mentioned and featured in this catalog. Don Bachardy and Vance Gerry are only two of the Los Angeles artists associated with Sylvester & Orphanos publications represented in this exhibit. Shirley Burden presented Stathis Orphanos's first Los Angeles showing of photographs. At one time the late Mr. Burden was the Chairman of the Department of Photography, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Orphanos's photographs, to be appreciated for their fine arts qualities, also serve as Los Angeles records: of the late bookseller Peggy Christian (President of the Friends of the UCLA Library, 1971) and of authors such as Christopher Isherwood.

The exhibit has a special section on Yannis Tsarouchis, which relates to the sharing of Greek and American culture. In this catalog Melina Mercouri, Minister of Culture and Sciences, Greece, 1981–1989, thanks us for including this segment. It is we who must thank her for her efforts and contributions. She set in motion the Sylvester & Orphanos project which allows us to view color plates of the work of Yannis Tsarouchis.

In November of 1949, UCLA Librarian Lawrence Clark Powell wrote in the library's *Acquisitive Notes* about the beginnings of a collection of modern Greek literature. He was enthusiastic about Greek writers associated with Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell. Their papers and books are two of the department's strongest collections. Powell also wrote of emerging Greek poets George Seferis and Odysseus Elytis. Powell described volumes added to the library and wrote that Elytis's work was "clairvoyant poetry about the winds and weathers of the Aegean." Both Seferis and Elytis would receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. Elytis is one of the many Greek cultural figures who have joined in tribute to Yannis Tsarouchis in the volume in preparation by Sylvester & Orphanos.

The department is pleased to share these areas, now, with the viewing public, as an invitation for research in our rare and unique material.

David S. Zeidberg, Head
Department of Special Collections
University Research Library
University of California, Los Angeles

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first thank the contributors, whose appreciations of the work of Ralph Sylvester and Stathis Orphanos add to this catalog: Graham Greene, Julie Harris, Melina Mercouri, Esai Morales, and Lizabeth Scott. Authors who have granted permission to quote from their letters and manuscripts are: Paul Bowles, James Merrill, Joyce Carol Oates, Reynolds Price, and John Updike. Don Bachardy has loaned a drawing and given permission to reproduce it in the catalog. Photographs by Stathis Orphanos are primarily loaned by the photographer for this exhibit. Some are the gift of the estate of Peggy Christian.

For the segment on Yannis Tsarouchis, the department thanks the following for arrangements in Athens: Despo Diamantidou, Apostolos Gavras, Dimitris P. Tsitouras, and Niki Gripari, niece of Yannis Tsarouchis.

The assistance of many colleagues is gratefully acknowledged. James Davis and Lilace Hatayama have advised on all details of the exhibit. Steve Kunishima and Ellen Watanabe printed the signs and the posters. Simon Elliott made arrangements for reproductions for the catalog. Paul G. Naiditch assisted with the editing and printing of the catalog. Judy Hale and Christopher Coniglio in UCLA Publication Services produced the catalog. There is great variation in the transliteration of modern Greek names and it is hoped that suitable forms have been found. Any errors in this or in the text remain mine.

The department thanks UCLA Chancellor Charles E. Young for his continued support of its publications.

The publishers Ralph Sylvester and Stathis Orphanos wish to express their affection for the late Peggy Christian and their gratitude for her interest in their bookselling career, and for easing them into that of publishers.

The publishers and the author wish to dedicate the work on this exhibit and catalog to the memory of two exceptional creators whom we were privileged to have known, and whose spirits forever changed us: Christopher Isherwood and Yannis Tsarouchis.

How Father Quixote Became a Monsignor

by

Graham Greene

1980
Sylvester & Orphanos
Los Angeles, California

Designed and printed by Grant Dahlstrom at the Castle Press.

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE A FOURTH VOLUME PUBLISHED BY THEM ...

I owe my warmest thanks to Sylvester & Orphanos for the three limited editions of my work which they have published. They were good enough to accept the first chapter of *Monsignor Quixote* before the book was finished and published. I was happy too to have my various verses in a volume—a first edition of any poems of mine since my first book which was *Babbling April,* of which I am rather ashamed. I am not ashamed of the volume they have published. Their editions of tiny volumes are almost jewel like and I am very proud that *A Weed Among the Flowers*—my account of a trip to China in 1957—is included among them. I would like to see a fourth volume published by them, but as I have reached the age of eighty five it seems unlikely.

GRAHAM GREENE
JUNE 1990

Ralph Sylvester. *Ralph Sylvester and Stathis Orphanos*. 1965. Black and white photograph.

LOS ANGELES PUBLISHERS SYLVESTER & ORPHANOS

A limited edition of Christopher Isherwood's *Christopher and His Kind* was the first publication of Los Angeles booksellers Ralph Sylvester and Stathis Orphanos. Their friend Peggy Christian suggested this project, since Isherwood's publishers had planned no special edition. They chose raw silk for a binding of publishers' sheets and asked Don Bachardy to provide portraits of Isherwood for the frontispiece and endpapers. Joyce Carol Oates, a satisfied customer of their bookselling business (modern first editions by catalog), was the first author to give the unknown publishers a manuscript. It was printed by Lillian Marks. The author was pleased: "I've thought now and then (sometimes almost with a sense of regret) that *Sentimental Education* is the best piece of sustained writing I've done, or will ever do. So it's a delight to see the beautiful job you've done with it...." The book was submitted to the Rounce & Coffin jury for the club's 1980 Western Books exhibit and was accepted. With these positive reactions from the author and the critical public, they felt encouraged to continue.

Both Ralph Sylvester and Stathis Orphanos are transplanted Californians. A Pennsylvanian from an Italian family, Sylvester was in the Army at Fort Ord and immediately liked California. Greek American Orphanos came to Los Angeles from Connecticut to see a prep school friend. Since this friend's mother was a press agent, the first call he answered at the friend's home was from Joan Crawford. Los Angeles seemed the place to be. Orphanos attended area schools, not having any definite major. His interest in books and thrift shop bargains led him to be a book scout for noted bookseller Peggy Christian. He is quick to thank his mentor for her knowledge, encouragement—and fair prices.

An initial booklist was issued by Sylvester, Orphanos, and Los Angeles friend George Fisher. The friends' interests changed and Fisher moved to New York, where he established his own successful business. The first Sylvester & Orphanos catalog of modern first editions was issued in 1973. With cover drawings by Bev R. Edie, the catalogs attracted interest and their business has built ever since.

The publishers' work for Oates served to entice other submissions. Nadine Gordimer praised *Sentimental Education* as elegantly designed and lacking the embellishments that she thought usually made limited editions meaningless decorative objects. She gave them a manuscript.

After the Oates book, the publishers chose to work with Grant Dahlstrom, because of his reputation for fine design as well as fine printing. Dahlstrom welcomed suggestions to contribute to the style of the final product: the color and texture of the cloth, the stamping or decoration of the covers, and the label or lettering of the spine.

Most title pages were done solely by Dahlstrom, but some were designed with the publishers' ideas in mind. For Gore Vidal's debunking essay, *Sex Is Politics and Vice Versa*, the publishers suggested red, white, and blue for appropriate irony. For the Greene work, they decided on gold for the title page to suggest an ecclesiastical look, which the printer designed with a border of gold flakes and shellac. They

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

IT HAPPENED THE DAY THE SUN ROSE

Los Angeles 1981 *California*

SYLVESTER & ORPHANOS

Printed by Patrick Reagh. Title page woodcut by Achilles Droungas.

suggested autumn leaves for John Cheever's *The Leaves, the Lion-Fish, and the Bear,* which Dahlstrom provided in three colors—a pensive melancholy suitable to the author's muted story fragments.

After the death of Grant Dahlstrom, they moved to printer Patrick Reagh and continued their collaboration of suggestion to the fine craftsman. Vance Gerry and Warren Chappell have done decorations or illustrations for their publications. For the Tennesse Williams story, Greek photorealist painter Achilles Droungas returned to his early woodcut technique to create a scene of Tangier, printed in color on the title page.

The publishers have made their most creative contributions in the design of bindings. For Gordimer's *Town and Country Lovers,* a volume of two stories, one of a White man in love with a Black woman, the other of a Black man in love with a White woman, the over-all design was of alternating black hearts on white and white hearts on black. Cheever specified paper-covered boards, and after requesting Dahlstrom to use leaves on the title page, Orphanos designed a pattern of these same leaves in rows, their colors shifting to suggest their falling. Dahlstrom had to be persuaded this would work, and it did.

The designs for embossing cloth bindings have sometimes been patterns, sometimes a decorative device. Some designs echo the title page, such as the red and blue stamping on no-nonsense white buckram for Vidal's work. At first glance the stamping on the cover of William Styron's *Shadrach* seems to be no more than a pleasing arrangement of the letters of the title, but his story is a memorial to the death of a cherished Black friend, and the arrangement of letters on the cover suggests a grave marker. They had designed patterned covers before choosing a gold emblem stamped with intitials for Reynolds Price's work, a fictional letter—now suitably monogrammed. Authors' reactions were heartening. Vidal drawled, "How patriotic," when shown his book. Styron wrote that they had produced a fitting monument to Shadrach's memory. Price admired his book's "lush chasteness."

They chose a red sun device for Naipaul's vignettes of the Congo, the "red round sun" from his text. The cover is a startling red and black, receding boxes containing a maze to suggest the nightmare of his days and nights on a Congo journey. Another bold design is that for Donald Barthelme's *The Emerald.* Brighter than emerald green stamping jumps from a black background in a shattering op art design. It is perfect to the shifting intrigue and bizarre psychology of this story, its prose as jarringly reflective as the emerald: "facet and facet and facet."

After the details of printing are established, their first work as publishers is to see that the colophon sheets are signed by the authors. To get a busy author to sign his or her name three hundred and thirty times in the right place is not an easy task. Joyce Carol Oates asked for a gentle reminder to use ink. Almost as difficult as getting the authors to sit down and sign is finding where the author sits. Vidal and Greene were in Italy at crucial times, and Greene's secretary wrote that it was unsafe to entrust colophons to the Italian mail. South Africa and Morocco also caused difficulties. Because Gordimer supported and wrote about Blacks in South Africa,

she felt that her colophons would have to be sent to New York when she was there. Paul Bowles had the most difficulties. Three long letters chronicle the complications of Moroccan mail. In Tangier, post offices close for lengthy religious holidays, open only two hours a day during the summer, and sometimes open but with soldiers with machine guns inside. He wrote that the colophons may have been seized by customs. This had happened once before, when he was questioned at length about the blank pages of paper, which officials held up to the light in order to detect possible hidden messages. The colophons did arrive, but their release had to be authorized by the Ministry of the Interior, which, since it was Ramadan, was closed. For the volume on Greek artist Yannis Tsarouchis, they have had to gather the signatures of contributors in Greece, England, Italy, and the United States.

Virginia Woolf once noted in her diary the chores of putting on labels and sewing wrappers. Sylvester & Orphanos have also concerned themselves with these chores. They not only have designed labels or stamps for the spines, but have affixed all of the labels. They also affixed the printed covers for the Cheever and Gordimer stories so that the patterns would meet the edges correctly.

With the delivery of the printed sheets, more labor begins for them. The deckled edges of the paper would be lost if the sheets were folded and trimmed by machine. Sylvester has inspected and hand-folded the sheets for each book. He uses a light table to align the box of print when folding the miniatures. For miniatures, printers leave extra margins which must be trimmed. Each edition of a miniature requires approximately 20,000 hand cuts by Sylvester. He has also learned the craft of making slipcases. He has made mounted cases, whereas the more usual commercial case is scored and folded board.

The publishers' choice of authors and painstaking detail in the crafts of the book arts have resulted in a body of fine signed limited editions. With no previous experience, they have extended their creative risks and standards with each succeeding and successful book. With careful reading of the texts, the publishers and printers and craftsmen have worked together to combine all design elements to provide support to the authors' meaning.

Authors have been pleased. Greene liked his first book done by them so much that he offered them his collected verse, an important work for small publishers. When James Merrill thanked the publishers for his book, *Samos,* he wrote that he was "quite bug-eyed." The book's "splendor" had turned him around: "My taste, whatever that is—or was—runs to the serviceable and compact; but what you've produced simply rises above & beyond such humdrum standards into a dream-world of gorgeousness. *Thank you!*" The volumes can be treasured for content and design, and are, as Paul Bowles said, "a delight to the eye and hand, a proof that the making of fine books is still within the realm of the possible."

A 1965 portrait of the two publishers uses the borrowed glamor of a carrousel mirror surrounded by lights. The work of their publications has pushed them into the international world of writers and artists. If the younger men dreamed it, the men today have achieved it.

Cover design by Stathis Orphanos from the title page lettering chosen by Grant Dahlstrom.

THE PUBLICATIONS OF SYLVESTER & ORPHANOS

With one exception, noted below, the editions are uniform: 330 copies; 300 are numbered, 26 lettered, and 4 bear the printed name of a recipient.

The binders have been Max Adjarian (1), Earle Gray (2), Bela Blau (3–23), and Allwyn O'Mara (24).

All books are signed by authors and contributors. Those artists who have signed are noted below.

Dates appear on all title pages designed for Sylvester & Orphanos, except for *Expelled* (23) and *A Weed Among the Flowers* (24), which are miniatures.

1976

Binding of publishers' sheets

1. Christopher Isherwood. *Christopher and His Kind.* Frontispiece portrait and special endpapers by Don Bachardy. Also signed by Don Bachardy.

Limited to 130 copies: 100 numbered, 26 lettered, and 4 with the printed name of a recipient.

1978

Printed by Lillian Marks at the Plantin Press, Los Angeles, California

2. Joyce Carol Oates. *Sentimental Education.*

1979

Designed by Grant Dahlstrom and printed at the Castle Press, Pasadena, California

3. Gore Vidal. *Sex is Politics and Vice Versa.*
4. William Styron. *Shadrach.*

1980

5. Graham Greene. *How Father Quixote Became a Monsignor.*
6. John Cheever. *The Leaves, the Lion-Fish, and the Bear.*
7. Nadine Gordimer. *Town and Country Lovers.*
8. V. S. Naipaul. *A Congo Diary.*
9. Margaret Drabble. *Hassan's Tower.*
10. James Merrill. *Samos.*
11. Donald Barthelme. *The Emerald.* Illustrated by Donald Barthelme.
12. J. V. Cunningham. *Dickinson: Lyric and Legend.*
13. Reynolds Price. *A Final Letter.*
14. Philip Roth. *Novotny's Pain.*

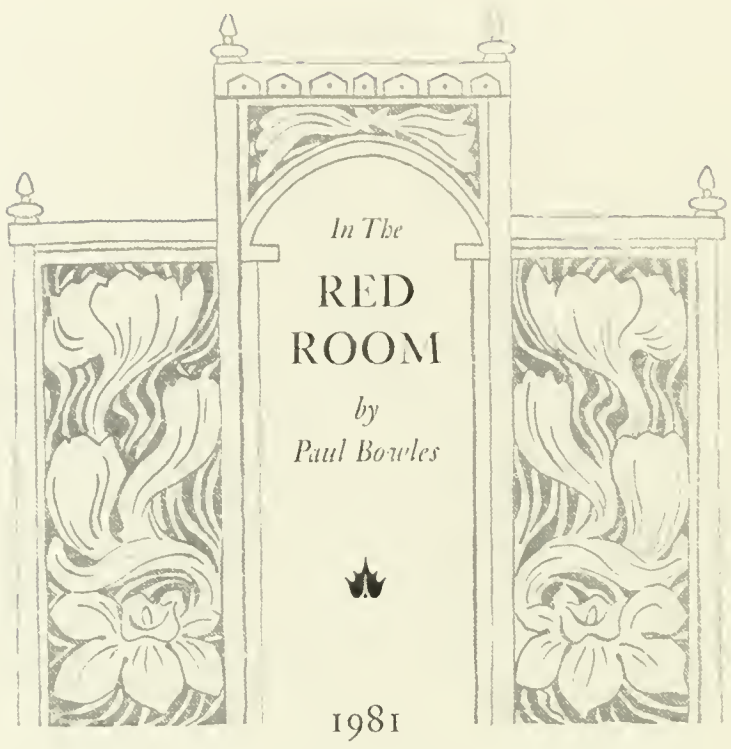
1981

15. James Purdy. *Scrap of Paper & The Berry-Picker: Two Plays by James Purdy.*

Printed by Patrick Reagh, Glendale, California

16. Tennessee Williams. *It Happened the Day the Sun Rose.* Title page woodcut by Achilles Droungas.
17. Paul Bowles. *In the Red Room.*

Don Bachardy. *Christopher Isherwood.* 1976. Pen and ink on paper.
Done for endpaper, *Christopher and His Kind.*



SYLVESTER & ORPHANOS
Los Angeles, California

Printed by Patrick Reagh. Title page designed by Vance Gerry from the binding design by Sylvester & Orphanos.

1982

18. Richard Adams. *The Legend of Te Tuna.*
19. John Cheever. *The National Pastime.* Title page illustration and decoration by Vance Gerry.

1983

20. Graham Greene. *A Quick Look Behind: Footnotes to an Autobiography.*

1985

21. William Hjortsberg. *Tales & Fables.* Illustrations by Vance Gerry.
22. John Updike. *Impressions.* With fourteen tipped-in color plates.

1988

Designed by Warren Chappell
and printed by Patrick Reagh

23. John Cheever. *Expelled.* Foreword: Malcolm Cowley. Afterword: John Updike. Decorations: Warren Chappell. Also signed by Warren Chappell.

1990

Printed by Patrick Reagh

24. Graham Greene. *A Weed Among the Flowers.* With an afterword by Sir Stephen Spender. Title page designed by Suzanne Watson. Illustrated by Vance Gerry.

In preparation

25. *Yannis Tsarouchis: The Face of Modern Greece.* Introduction by Melina Mercouri. Signed by Yannis Tsarouchis, Melina Mercouri, and the sixteen contributors. Thirty-two mounted color plates in portfolio, text in separate portfolio. Box and two cases decorated with silkscreens of drawings done by Yannis Tsarouchis for this publication.

Printed by Patrick Reagh. 1988.

... FOR A BETTER BALANCE BETWEEN OUR CULTURE AND YOURS

In August of 1983, as Minister of Culture and Sciences of Greece, I made the following observations in an interview in *Vanity Fair:*

> Instead of seeing the world from the eyes of others, we Greeks must learn about our own culture. American films are shown in every theatre in Greece. How many Greek films have had a wide distribution in the United States? Your best authors are translated in Greek. How many of ours can you find in English? America inundates the world both with your wonderful things and your not-so-wonderful things. You have quality. You have talent. You have money. We are open to your culture. It is my job to defend our culture and preserve our identity, and to ask for a better balance between our culture and yours.

Having read this interview and deciding to act upon my plea contained within it, Stathis Orphanos wrote to me at the Ministry. He asked me to contact the ailing and reclusive Yannis Tsarouchis, our greatest living artist, in order to publish a book on his art. The book would be published in America by Sylvester & Orphanos. I was also asked to write a preface for this proposed book. Both requests were quickly granted and the book had its beginnings.

I have observed the progress of this ambitious undertaking and have been pleased with what I have seen. My preface has now been joined by tributes to Yannis Tsarouchis, who died in 1989, by two of Greece's greatest poets, Odysseus Elytis and Yannis Ritsos; by the Greek artist Alekos Fassianos; by Greek directors Michael Cacoyannis and Costa Gavras; and by our leading composers Manos Hadjidakis and Mikis Theodorakis. This extraordinary gathering of Greek artists who, despite political differences, have come together to pay tribute to one of their own is the ultimate homage to Yannis Tsarouchis that members of his culture can bestow.

But we also have in this book an extraordinary gathering of non-Greek participants. American authors James Merrill, Reynolds Price, and John Updike join artists Paul Cadmus, David Hockney, and the photographer Horst. From England we have Sir Stephen Spender and from Italy Franco Zeffirelli. Jules Dassin, an American who lives and works in Greece and who has significantly achieved what this book, too, is succeeding in rendering, is also here to pay tribute to Yannis Tsarouchis.

I am forever grateful to Stathis Orphanos and Ralph Sylvester for heeding my plea for a better balance between the cultures of our two nations and for their determined efforts to undertake and complete this important book.

For the exhibition of Sylvester & Orphanos editions at the University of California, Los Angeles, I send my sincerest wishes for its justified success. I extend to all involved my heartfelt appreciation for including within this exhibition a special tribute to modern Greek culture and to Yannis Tsarouchis.

MELINA MERCOURI
MINISTER OF CULTURE AND SCIENCES, GREECE, 1981–1989
MAY 1990

Stathis Orphanos. *Melina Mercouri.* 1984. Black and white photograph.

Stathis Orphanos. *Yannis Tsarouchis.* 1984. Black and white photograph.

YANNIS TSAROUCHIS (1910–1989): THE FACE OF MODERN GREECE

The subjects of this great painter's life and work were the spirit and heritage of the objects he collected around him, the Greek ceremonies he thrust himself into. Myth and music. Greek Orthodox ritual. Dance, and sitting in cafés. Echoes of Greek art—from Polygnotos to the naïve Theophilos, from columns of Attic Greece to the pine floors and simple furniture of island homes—inform his style, both Greek and modern.

Three forces shaped his vision. He learned from Fotis Kondoglou that Byzantine painting still had lessons to offer the modern Greek artist. He learned academic technique—like Swedish gymnastics, Tsarouchis has said—from Konstantinos Parthenis, who also introduced modern trends to Greece. He was influenced by folklorist Angeliki Hadjimichali and traveled the whole of Greece and to Smyrna to broaden his knowledge of the life and spirit of the Greeks. In Athens he studied art of the Hellenic diaspora: Coptic embroidery and Fayum portraits.

In 1940, when painting a large nude with a dark background, he hit upon what it was that must distinguish his art—and Greek art—from what held sway for centuries. His diary records stopping work. The results disgusted him. He was using techniques from the nineteenth century, the Academy. As an antidote, he copied a mosaic known as the Piraeus Medusa. He pinned this next to the model's head. They resembled each other. A secret of Hellenistic painting emerged: colors must be rendered exactly. The tonalities of Renaissance chiaroscuro, the subtle shading of darks into still darker backgrounds, were rejected. Greek painting, with its bright true colors, cold and warm, became his standard. With this approach to the modern through completely Greek sources, he was able to revolutionize Greek painting. His influence on Greek thought—still felt today—had begun.

The Alexandrian poet Constantine P. Cavafy, in literature, was perhaps the first Greek intellectual to attempt to link influences of the Hellenic diaspora. Rome conquered Greece, but Greek culture prevailed. With the rise of Christianity and the capital at Constantinople, the empire divided itself in half and in the east the Greek language prevailed, in the form of *koinē*, a dialect understood in Athens or Antioch or Alexandria. Cavafy used forms of modern Greek in an analogous manner, and with pride in the language's survival, set his poems in all of these cities.

In an interview with American poet Edouard Roditi, Tsarouchis told of his admiration for Cavafy: "I have tried, as he did too, to develop an individual style that might similarly have served as a theme to a Greek artist of antiquity or of the Byzantine era." What Tsarouchis gave the Greeks was a *koinē* for artists—not a set of rules, but a painterly language with an enlarged vocabulary, primarily Greek.

His hand had at its command the vast range of possibilities of centuries of Greek art to create a realistic style thoroughly modern. He saw what was eternal in the present as his eye fixed on Greek subjects. Neoclassic houses with rows of broken roof tiles, as neglected as the broken monuments of Attic Greece which inspired them. Faces which belong to persons breathing the island air, of women who

dress for weddings in costumes covered with glittering gold coins. Country village men who wear their city suits awkwardly. Young men who sit bored in tavernas, while others dance. Soldiers and sailors who sit uncomfortably in their required uniforms as if they long to get rid of them—and do, lounging barefoot on flowered nineteenth century couches, lying nude on the brass beds of cheap hotels.

The 1940 *Nude with Bandaged Hand* is one result of this aesthetic awakening. The boy stands with one foot forward like a still, Archaic *kouros*. But that foot is awkwardly large, as in Cézanne or a photograph with a tilted camera, or as a naïve painter would attempt, appropriately large to balance the canvas. Background perspective is forgotten in a flat wash of contrasting colors. The stark unmixed white suggests a strong reflection of the vivid Greek light, a technique common to Byzantine painting, as well as Fayum. The flowers could as well be funereal as decorative. Their pink is reflected in the tones of the youth's body. The blossoms and the vulnerable youth are reminders of mortality. Life mask is death mask. The boy with his soulful gaze could be from any Greek era, as well as be the flesh and blood modern Greek that he is, in 1940 the subject of a dictator, living in a world on the brink of war, in a country due to be invaded by two forces. It is a portrait of a *kouros* become *palikari*—hero of the war of independence and used since to denote a handsome young hero.

Tsarouchis gives individual faces the collective myth and restores individual bodies to the timeless space of an Attic statue, a Fayum portrait, an icon sitting in dim candlelight in an island peasant chapel. One function of icons is to fade to reveal a spiritual world beyond. The images of Tsarouchis are icons—the faces of Greece—and, finally, fade to reveal the world, the spirit of Greece.

The *Sailor with Pink Background* (1955) sits pensively, his arms leaning on a café table unique to Greece, in a color of its sea and sky. His face is thoroughly Greek: dark eyes, straight dark brows. His thoughts may go forward or backward. His expression could be deep thought or nostalgia, memories of an island home, its Easter ceremonies, and the family he left behind for this compulsory stint in the service. He may have just danced the introspective solo *zebekiko*. He may rise to dance, he may rise to go to a cheap hotel of the neighborhood. Tsarouchis has given images of these activities and rendered the young sailor's thought almost plastic.

In Greece, isolated for four hundred years from Europe, the middle class had rushed to become European, which meant adapting what was current in the north at that time: styles of music, painting, even language and manners. An insecure middle class in Athens wanted an art which had the international stamp, Paris. Even icons came to be painted in a European style. The Greek eye had changed since independence and a restoration of the previous thousand years of tradition did not come easily.

Before full acceptance and commercial success, Tsarouchis did stage designs, bringing his corrective eye to those, as well. He designed international productions by Franco Zeffirelli for Maria Callas. He did art decoration for *Stella* (1955), Melina Mercouri's first movie, directed by Michael Cacoyannis. It was the first to

Yannis Tsarouchis. *Nude with Bandaged Hand*. 1939–1940. Oil on canvas.
Collection of the Tsarouchis Foundation, Maroussi.

Yannis Tsarouchis. *The Departure.* 1968. Oil on paper.
Collection of the Tsarouchis Foundation, Maroussi.

Yannis Tsarouchis. *Sailor with Pink Background.* 1955. Oil on canvas.
Private collection, Athens.

depict the life of *bouzouki* tavernas, a life middle class Greece rejected. Like Greek painting, Greek music was little appreciated in Greece. Although traced from Greek influences, it was reintroduced from Turkey. It was played in working class tavernas in Piraeus, the port city adjacent to Athens. The culture consisted of dance, dress, and an argot. The music was known as *rebetika*. The lyrics depict scenes like those from Cavafy—or Tsarouchis: "... the small café where we often met. I sit at the little table, love lives again...." This culture can be compared to the jazz culture of African Americans or the *pachuco* ("zoot suit") culture of Los Angeles Mexican Americans in the 1940s. It was similar to that which Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges recorded, when he set stories and poems in the *tango* neighborhoods at the outskirts of Buenos Aires, to celebrate the "streetcorner man"—*"el hombre de la esquina rosada."*

In 1960 *Never on Sunday* launched Mercouri as an international star and through composer Manos Hadjidakis Greek music was heard throughout the world. Greece was never the same. Blaring amplifiers attracted ever-increasing numbers of tourists.

Tsarouchis himself addressed this change in Greek culture in *The Departure* (1968). A young man packs, perhaps to leave an island for Athens, or Greece for work in Germany. As James Merrill has written of another late Tsarouchis painting, the artist has here assembled from his life, his studio a "theater of memory." The room holds symbols sacred to Tsarouchis: simple curtains, brass bed, blanket with key motif, a bouquet of lilac and roses in Greek pottery. There is a double loss. The young man is losing his heritage. The setting has lost, Greece has lost, as well. Who will fill his place?

A work [title and date unknown] which appears to be only a figure study has subtle Greek underpinnings. The young man's legs rest on a Greek café chair—a simple chair in natural materials now mostly replaced by international plastic. His arm rests on a café table, a symbol of the public life in Greece. These tables were often used by the artist in his studio to hold his brushes and paints. The artist gives the model a pose which suggests a figure of the Elgin marbles. The triangular composition inscribes the young man in a pediment which contained the ancient Greek sculpture. Tsarouchis has given the modern Greek the prominence of an ancient.

In *Tsarouchis: The Face of Modern Greece* Sylvester & Orphanos reproduce thirty-two of the artist's major works in color plates. The publishers have gathered tributes from writers and artists awed by his work. David Hockney writes of his thrill and astonishment at having come across Tsarouchis paintings. John Updike writes that Tsarouchis's portraits of men in suits are "like nothing else in modern art." After studying Tsarouchis, Reynolds Price is compelled to quote Rilke, after seeing an Archaic Apollo: "Change your life." The book, introduced by Melina Mercouri, also has essays from Greeks who knew and worked with the artist in all aspects of his work. The book is also a tribute to those persons, like Mercouri, a part of the Greek renaissance of poets, actors, composers, and artists, who engaged the world at the middle of the twentieth century. The portfolio by the Los Angeles publishers is a stage for the memory and influence of Yannis Tsarouchis.

Yannis Tsarouchis. [Particulars of the work are unknown.]

Stathis Orphanos. *Juli Veee (Gyula Visnyei).* 1975. Black and white photograph.

A DEDICATION TO HIS VISION ...

Bantering a bit on how or what to capture, Stathis and I gradually discovered the various moods within the location, and proceeded to have a pleasantly edifying experience.

The old Hollywood lot in which we shot, now full of cavernous apartments, pregnant with character and rich in texture, was said to have belonged to Valentino. The setting sun imbued the old mansion with an eerie sensuality.

It seems as if the soul of a dying sun illuminates me, anonymous, like one in the endless procession of dying stars that were once the life blood of an industry of dreams. They cast the last of their glorious rays upon any who would entertain their seduction.

In this haunted hollow of Hollywood the photographer could easily summon the essence of Valentino; timeless masculinity ever aware of the noble, vulnerable and female inherent. One could not help but to interpret the beauty, spirit, and pain within these walls.

It takes a special talent simultaneously to relax and inspire one's subject. Stathis has a dedication to his vision that makes it enjoyable to be part of the creative process with him. Knowing the history of the property, Stathis was able to evoke an ethereal quality in the surrounding atmosphere, as well as in the photographs themselves.

ESAI MORALES
JULY 1990

Stathis Orphanos. *Esai Morales.* 1988. Black and white photograph.

HIS PHOTOGRAPHS CAPTURED SO MANY FACETS OF MY PERSON

What a fascinating experience it was to be photographed by Stathis Orphanos.

I had met him briefly before sitting for him. However, I had seen his portfolio and I was exceedingly impressed. I thought—his photographs have an elegance.

When he arrived for the sitting, I was charmed by his vibrant aura—his vitality.

As we were about to begin, I was suddenly aware that Stathis brought no equipment with him—he had only his camera. I was startled when he said "I use only natural light in my photography." I was accustomed to being illuminated by lamps and bright lights during photographic sessions. This, indeed, was different. I realize now that his understanding of natural light in photography is innate. This sense is brilliant, and you will find it evident in all his portraiture.

As we proceeded I was transported into his world of creativity, sensitivity, and artistry.

Upon seeing the outcome of this wondrous encounter, I was ecstatic. His photographs captured so many facets of my person. It was as if he had peered into the depths of me and excavated moods and feelings that had never been photographed before. How extraordinary!

I shall not soon forget this joyous and fruitful collaboration.

LIZABETH SCOTT
MAY 1990

Stathis Orphanos. *Lizabeth Scott [Film noir].* 1988. Black and white photograph.

THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY MISS BRONTË

I am a great admirer of Stathis Orphanos and it was an especially happy time for me to pose in my Charlotte Brontë costume for Stathis. I sat on a chair in front of the sliding door to the garden—not a bit of artificial light—and our friend Juli Veee held a paisley cloth in back of me and—*voilà.* Stathis with his great artistry took a remarkable picture, I think, and seemed to get the very essence of the nineteenth century Miss Brontë.

JULIE HARRIS
MAY 1990

Stathis Orphanos. *Julie Harris as Charlotte Brontë.* 1986. Color photograph.

Stathis Orphanos. *David Hockney.* 1985. Black and white photograph.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF STATHIS ORPHANOS

The bookselling of Sylvester & Orphanos took the direction of modern first editions because of Stathis Orphanos's interest in that literature. It was what he had studied, what he himself had sought in bookstores. When a student at CSULA, he enrolled in a course titled "The Angry Young Men" taught by D. Parker. He did not know that "D." would turn out to be Dorothy. Though this was not a writing class, he showed her some of his sketches about Greece. She liked them enough to encourage him to write a novel. He also showed her some of his photographs. She liked these, too, but said, "You'll have to choose, honey, between photography and writing." He did choose, and for some years pursued writing. Bookselling and publishing left no time for writing, but he made time for darkroom projects.

He had bought a Rolleiflex in 1958 and still considers photographs from his first roll of film to be good ones. These photographs show an awareness of the mystery light gives ordinary objects: a boy on a sofa, dog on his lap, the sofa covered with pillows.... Early subjects were friends, their portraits complex compositions.

His rules are that the subject be well lit by natural light, the eyes to show fully. The picture must be in focus as much as "demon cameras" allow. There must be an uncluttered background—"no lamps coming out of heads." His photographs are portraits or figure studies in black and white, which he has developed himself with increasing darkroom sophistication.

For many years he did not photograph celebrities—such as Miss Parker or his friend Christopher Isherwood—feeling one has won over audiences half-way because of the famous face. He did photograph Isherwood, after knowing him five years, when he felt he could offer new images to those of the often-photographed writer.

Once he had established ties with the writers he published, he decided he would ask to photograph them. This he accomplished primarily with one trip east in 1981 with his friend Juli Veee (Gyula Visnyei), the San Diego Socker's star midfielder. The idea worked well. Juli met writers he admired. The writers, somewhat jaded with interviewers and photographers, took interest from meeting America's three-time most valuable player. Orphanos has now photographed over one hundred authors. His portraits are regularly requested to promote authors' works.

Most of his sessions are hectic. A roll of film dropped and rolled between Gore Vidal's feet. George Cukor, with his director's quickness with character told him—as he was practically backing into one of the director's famous Braques—"You're very shrewd, pretending not to know what you're doing, so we help you." His concentration centers as he notes details of the sitter, then builds to the precise moment of taking the picture—only the first step in his art.

He likes manipulating the image and believes in darkroom juggling. A catastrophic session brings his creative powers into being. David Hockney was photographed on a bleak day with minimal available light. Orphanos used a close-up lens inches from the artist's face. In the darkroom he found he had one exposure he could print. This he did with the image

spilling down from the center of a bent sheet of paper. The resulting print—elongated, somewhat blurred—suggests the rush of a busy artist.

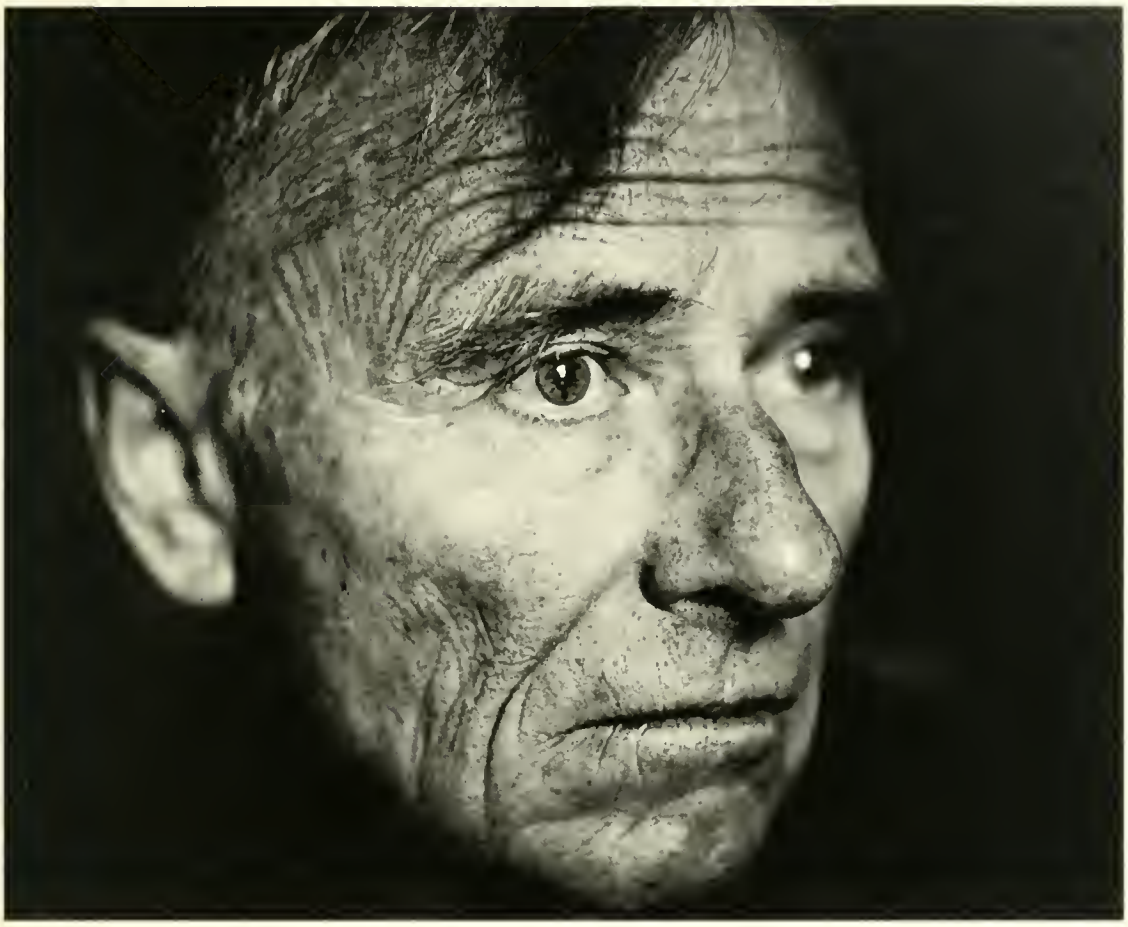
Melina Mercouri was reluctant to be photographed after a tiring official trip. A gift of a book with a flattering inscription changed her mind. From her purse she dragged out lipstick, which she applied without a mirror, and with sweeping gestures took a brush to her hair. She lowered her head and shook her hair. She raised her head and, looking out the window, slapped her hands together: "All right, let's go, photographs now!" He took only two. In the first her fatigue showed, but—inspired by the session—in the second she became the star. He used this shot, removing the pedestrian office background to collage her image with that of one of the Elgin marbles, which she has sought to have returned to Greece.

Sessions with Lizabeth Scott and Esai Morales were not hurried. Each at first presented professional images. With the progress of the session, the actress became more introspective. Her hair fell as she leaned against a doorway. The photographer saw a moment when—script removed—the actress looked into herself to find—confront, even—what it was that enabled her to create her *film noir* roles. She in her make-up could be turning toward or away from the lush and seductive black of the photographer's composition. Morales assumed the brash character of his role in *La Bamba*. The photographer seized this as a flash of light illuminated a window behind. The reflection caught what was not present in the actor's pose. The photograph contains an infinity of opposites in black and white: dominance, submission ... even masculine, feminine; night, day; life, death.

A series taken of athletes in the locker room tested his ability to isolate from the mundane chaos the chance pose and to engage subjects for quick portraits. Imaginative framing presents the images like film, catching moments when strict playing field relations are exchanged for play and banter, when uniforms are exchanged for the expressiveness of the body. Reynolds Price has observed that these pictures "go well past the usual hurlyburly to the core of male bonding that's so mysterious, so threatful to women, yet so necessary to men's continuance as whole upright and unconsumed creatures."

Orphanos's photographs fall into two broad areas: those with elaborate backgrounds or backgrounds collaged with the sitter's image; and those which move in closely on the subject observed. This latter technique works best with someone who has the prescient qualities of age. The isolated faces of writers—Graham Greene, Isherwood—reveal in their character that of the hundreds they have analyzed and fixed in fiction.

Reynolds Price has stated that Orphanos's photographs of writers are "far and away the best being taken by anybody known to [him]." Both John Updike and William Styron found their photographs "splendid." Updike wrote that he felt Orphanos was "giving him the definitive personality [he] always lacked." Although the photographer has used the word "seize" in gaining an image of his sitters, the results of his craft, the hours in the darkroom, give the viewer a complex image appropriate to the introspection, the genius of those photographed.



Stathis Orphanos. *Christopher Isherwood.* 1972. Black and white photograph.

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